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Thailand and Chinese Shrimp Found to Contain Chloramphenicol

The Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce has found imported shrimp containing the antibiotic Chloramphenicol. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has banned Chloramphenicol for use in food producing animals. The tested products found containing the antibiotic included those marketed as "Lumar Shrimp, a product of Thailand," and "Sea Best/Raw Salad Shrimp, a product of China," according to Commissioner Lester Spell, Jr. "Today, some products, markets as "Lumar Shrimp, a product of Thailand," and "Sea Best/Raw Salad Shrimp, a product of China," will be taken off-sale." The 25 randomly tested samples, taken during late June and early July, consisted of at least 16 ounces of a product. Eleven of the samples pulled were a product of China, with the others being from Ecuador, Thailand, Venezuela or Vietnam.

"Review of sample retail outlets has shown that there may be significant quantities of imported products entering U.S. commercial food channels without complete safeguards," Spell said. "The European Union and Canada recently banned Chinese shrimp to their countries."

"We consider any confirmed presence of Chloramphenicol as adulterated. We will be requiring that any shrimp in which samples are found to have a detectable level of Chloramphenicol, 1 part per billion or greater, to be destroyed. We will continue to work closely with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration on this matter. While we cannot require shrimp to be tested before being offered for sale, we can randomly test shrimp for this drug. We will continue to do so," Spell stated. Noting the considerable efforts of the Mississippi State Chemical Laboratory in conducting the tests on short notice, Spell praised the Laboratory's state of the art technology and instrumentation. Dr. Kevin Armbrust, State Chemist, said, "Quick verifiable results such as we have here were possible because of committed cooperation among agencies."

FDA has banned the use of the antibiotic in food production animals because of a number of health effects from human exposure to Chloramphenicol. It is a

potent antibiotic developed in the 1950's and is being studied as a possible contributor to the development of anemia.

The antibiotic is still used in very serious infections, but only under strict medical supervision. Due to unpredictable effects of doses on different patient populations, it has not been possible to identify a safe level of Chloramphenicol in animal or seafood products.

The world production of farm-raised shrimp has increased six-fold in the last decade. Farming of shrimp in China has seen huge growth in recent years, with imports to the U.S. doubling since 1999 from 19.5 million pounds to 40 million pounds in 2000.